

LANCASTER COUNTY
DMC COMMITTEE MINUTES
April 19, 2005
9:30 – 10:30 a.m.

Guide to the Juvenile Justice System Brochure Revision Update

The draft brochure was passed out and the group suggested some minor changes. It was suggested that HHS, LSO and LPD be added under the phone number section. A paragraph explaining HHS was also suggested. Lori is going to look at the section what is Juvenile Court and add to it or revise it. Melissa will make all of the changes and the brochure should be ready for distribution.

Changes in the Human Services Office

Melissa explained that at the end of her contract with Lancaster County (June 30th), Corey would be taking over the responsibilities of her position as well as overseeing Graduated Sanctions. She explained that Kit has been trying to get the position as a County employee instead of an independent contractor for several years. Melissa said that Kit asked her to accept a part-time Expediter contract and other possible contracts.

Mattel Children's Foundation – Domestic Grant Program

Melissa passed out a grant opportunity with a funding priority of Girl's Empowerment. The YWCA expressed interest in designing a curriculum for females similar to the African American Empowerment Curriculum. Melissa is going to work with Sheila on this project.

African American Empowerment Training Update

The Lancaster County Human Services in partnership with the College of Education and Human Services at UNL will offering a training in Promoting African American Youth Empowerment (PAAYE) to members of the African American, African and Hispanic community. African American, African and Hispanic men will be selected who are willing to commit to a training process conducted by Dr. Leon D. Caldwell. Selected applicants must be motivated to make a difference in the lives of African American, African or Hispanic male youth in Lancaster County by working in schools, faith-based-organizations, community settings, or juvenile corrections as teachers/instructors of the Empowerment curriculum. Participants will receive training in classroom management, group facilitation, crisis management, youth advocacy, cultural consciousness, and other youth development skills. Participants are expected to commit to a yearly calendar of activities that they schedule and initiate that culminates with a presentation at the 2006 African American Family Empowerment Summit in Lincoln. A \$225 stipend will be given the participants.

Melissa passed out the revised budget and date for the training. She explained that the County is using \$8,000 from a DMC fund for the Empowerment training. The County was unable to apply for the Title V Grant because recipients will not be announced until late June, which is too late for this training. The original budget was for \$15,000 so much of what was in the original budget was taken out. The stipend was reduced from \$500 to \$225 for the participants and the training was cut from 3 days to 2 days. Leon's consultant fee was reduced from \$4,000 to \$3,000. The Instructor Shirts and Framed Certificates were will not be provided.

Melissa asked everyone to forward her names of people that would be interested in the training.

There was lengthy discussion on evaluation and tracking the youth that may attend an empowerment class taught. Some wanted the trainer/leaders to have all youth that were taught the empowerment curriculum to fill out a release and a questionnaire. Melissa stated that this may not be feasible and may make the youth apprehensive to stay in the empowerment class that is being offered. She suggested that a sample could be contacted for voluntary feedback and follow-up. It was suggested having a University student help with the evaluation project.

It was suggested that the Melissa or Corey offer more support, direction, help and follow-up after the training. It was suggested that we draw up expectations for the trainers and have agency partners to provide places that the Empowerment Participants could go to conduct groups and reach youth. Sheli said that the Detention Center would like to have two participants conduct groups there and be an agency partner.

Try Another Way Training

Melissa announced that the Try Another Way Training was going to be this Friday April 22nd from 9:30 – 3:30. If anyone is interested in attending let her know. There will be another training in June in Omaha.

Juvenile Service Strategic Plan Update

Melissa stated that before the end of her contract she would like to update the Juvenile Services Strategic Plan. She passed out the current plan's priorities and a copy of revised priorities as well as the current plan's goals and objectives. She asked if anyone from the group would like to help her with updating this plan for Priority 3. Dennis, Sandy, Sheli, Claudia and Corey agreed to formulate new goals, objectives and action steps and draft the plan. The plan will then be brought back to the group for review and revision.

Update on increasing representation attending our DMC meetings

Melissa stated that she has attended that last two Cultural Center meetings and personally called Cultural and Community Centers and many other people that may be interested in DMC. As a result over ten new people have agreed to attend and the representation of the group has been expanded greatly.

Discussion of Contributing Factors to DMC

Melissa passed out the LPS Truancy Rate by Race statistics to the group for discussion. The group commented that the rate for low income and minorities was much higher. Truancy issues may be something that the group incorporates into the strategic plan.

There was discussion on how lack of knowledge or understanding of the juvenile justice system attributes to the increase in minorities involved with the juvenile justice system. Claudia stated in the diversion program they let them know the benefits of doing Diversion rather than going to court and many of the youth and parents are unaware of benefits of Diversion. This group agreed that there needs to be more public education in this area. It was suggested having someone speak in the schools or in a class to let youth in elementary and middle school know the

repercussions of a criminal record. The group also stated that it is important to get information to the parents and to as many locations such as churches, newspaper, the Free Times and other media as possible.

Lori explained how early documentation of criminal history affects the youth later in the Juvenile Justice System. She explained that a seven-year-old may do something and get a referral because his mom is a meth addict and they want to get the child in the system so he can get help. This referral may result in this youth to get a higher score which will make them more likely to go to Kearney. With all of the scoring instruments an arrest at age seven on top of other arrests will affect this youth where another youth who did the same thing at age 7 may not get a referral because he is from a stable family.

System education and how to get a youth help without being in the juvenile justice system may need to be looked at. It was suggested that the school is the one place that they can reach the youth.

Several people expressed concern that youth are being detained that are not a threat to society. Discussion moved from FTA youth to Foster Care youth to runaway youth to lack of options to deal with youth. It was suggested that Assessment work with Probation and HHS to formulate crisis plans for these youth.

It was suggested that a forum to discuss issues like this is needed. It was suggested that a list of items to discuss should be made as a next step.

Next meeting date

May 17th at 9:30 a.m.